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EAST BROAD TOP

TO THE MINES AND BACK

By
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AN INTRODUCTION

The history of narrow gauge railroading in America is replete with countless tales of frustrated ambitions, corporate mutations, and mistaken missions. From the two-foot gauge territory in Maine's backwoods to the lonely desert in California's Owens Valley, narrow gauge lines were conceived and constructed in pursuit of elusive goals and euphoric traffic projections. The East Broad Top Railroad was a notable exception to this pattern. For the most part, it operated profitably under its original charter through eight decades as a common carrier, never reached for that which it could not grasp, and operated its last train on April 6, 1956 for much the same purpose that occasioned its first on November 4, 1874.

The EBT was chartered to connect the isolated Broad Top coal field in southern Huntingdon County with the main line of the Pennsylvania Railroad at the Juniata River and to serve the iron furnaces then existing at Rockhill Furnace. Over the years, the iron industry faded, but the fine low-volatile bituminous coal continued to move in a volume sufficient to support the railroad. The EBT overcame the problems inherent in handling through traffic that originated or terminated on standard gauge lines. This was the nub of the problem for narrow gauge railroads everywhere. By the 1930s, EBT had two workable solutions—one for coal, the other for general ladings—and it was through these measures that the railroad's longevity was assured.

In later years, EBT accomplished its mission by using heavy 2-8-2's and steel hopper cars, a well-maintained physical plant and a positive attitude. The EBT probably had as much in common with the prosperous, tonnage-hauling Bessemer & Lake Erie standard gauge as it did with the luckless, mountain-climbing Rio Grande Southern narrow gauge. To those who visited the EBT during the late 1940s and early 1950s, the property radiated an aura of stability, confidence, and permanence unmatched by any other narrow gauge railroad. It seemed an odds-on favorite to survive by many years the remnants of an ever-shrinking three-foot gauge empire in Colorado. In late 1953, *Trains* magazine opined that it could be safely assumed that loaded hoppers will trundle through Orbisonia yard for many years to come. But this was not to be.

The dependence of the EBT upon coal for some 70% of its tonnage was both a blessing and a curse, for in the post-Korean War period, the industrial market for its coal was seduced by "cheap" foreign oil and the local brick works began to fire their kilns with natural gas. The inevitable result was a petition dated November 21, 1955 to the ICC for abandonment of the entire railroad. This was granted with little protest and, by the spring of 1956, the railroad was officially dead. There was no lingering cliff-hanger, no decades of penury. EBT's life ended with a sudden finality.

With the EBT's demise, the last narrow gauge east of Colorado ceased to operate. It had served the half pastoral, half mountainous area between the Pennsylvania Railroad's main line and the nation's first truly modern superhighway, an area whose railroad was a byway into one of the least urbanized parts of the Commonwealth. Yet here, along the waters of the Aughwick and among the ridges of Sideling Hill, the EBT had proved itself, its men, and its machines.

But one cannot write of the EBT entirely in the past tense. In an almost Biblical resurrection, the railroad was restored in part to the living by the late Nick Kovalchick, the man who bought it for dismantling. The narrow gauge was left idle but unbroken, and in 1960, at the suggestion of some Orbisonians, Kovalchick set about to restore some five miles of line. What started as a local celebration became a celebrated tourist attraction, popular with the public and railfans alike. Many of East Broad Top's riders were not even born in the days when the line was in full operation. And who is not to say that, of a summer season's eventide, the whistles echoing along the Aughwick do not arouse the spirits of old at Saltillo, Rocky Ridge, and Robertsdale.

John Krause

FRONT COVER:
The narrow gauge East Broad Top Railroad Company existed to serve the coal mines in the southern reaches of Pennsylvania's Huntingdon County. Delivery of the rich, semi-bituminous coal took place at Mt. Union, a point on the Pennsylvania Railroad's main line to all important markets for the fuel. A fleet of diminutive yet heavy-duty hopper cars were shuttled from Mt. Union *To the Mines and Back. —Robert F. Collins*

INSIDE FRONT COVER:
No. 17 and the entire train crew stand in portraiture on the wye at Robertsdale. It's March 23, 1956, two weeks before service on the East Broad Top Railroad came to an end. *—Philip A. Ronfor.*

ABOVE:
The automobile road across the mountain intersected the EBT's tracks at Kimmel, high on Sideling Hill. No. 16, escorting a trainload of coal down from the mountain heights, whistles loud and clear in the chill air.

CONTENTS

An Introduction **2**
Orbisonia Visit **4**
At the Roundhouse **7**
Shops and Yards **10**
Orbisonia to Mt. Union **16**
Mt. Union **20**
Near the Water Tank **29**
Mt. Union Station **33**
South of Orbisonia **38**
Narco Branch **44**
Saltillo **48**
Sideling Hill **53**
Kimmel **57**
Rocky Ridge **59**
The Broad Top Coal Fields **61**
Robertsdale **62**
Woodvale **69**
EBT Men at Work **71**
Motor Car M-1 ..... **76**
The Last Run **79**
Second Career **80**

ORBISONIA VISIT

Philip A. Ronfor

The two-story frame building at Orbisonia which served the EBT from 1903 was, and is, one of the most easily recognizable corporate headquarters in the railroad industry. The dispatcher, general manager, auditor, and traffic department shared space on the second floor where a bay window allowed the dispatcher to observe operations in the immediate area. On the first floor, the railroad provided a waiting room, ticket office, and baggage and express facilities, plus space for the Rockhill Furnace post office. When the railroad was built, Rockhill Furnace clustered around the iron furnaces a half mile away. As the iron works declined, the town site migrated toward the station. The railroad place name, however, has always been Orbisonia, the borough only a few hundred feet in the opposite direction. The name fits well historically, for the railroad occupies much of the land bought in 1872 from T.E. Orbison.

[LEFT:] **Today, the building still serves the operations of the line, with the only major changes being the replacement of the post office by a gift shop, and the installation of a snack bar in the erstwhile baggage room. Otherwise, the scene is very much as depicted in this 1955 view, save that empty hoppers no longer rattle the windows and 1940 Buicks no longer pause at the crossing.**

[OPPOSITE:] **Winter dusk gathers early and the depot lights are turned on by quitting time. The neat, well-maintained appearance of the station and yard areas was characteristic of the EBT, for this was a railroad whose people traditionally took pride in the property.**

Philip R. Hastin

GENERAL

Both, John Krause

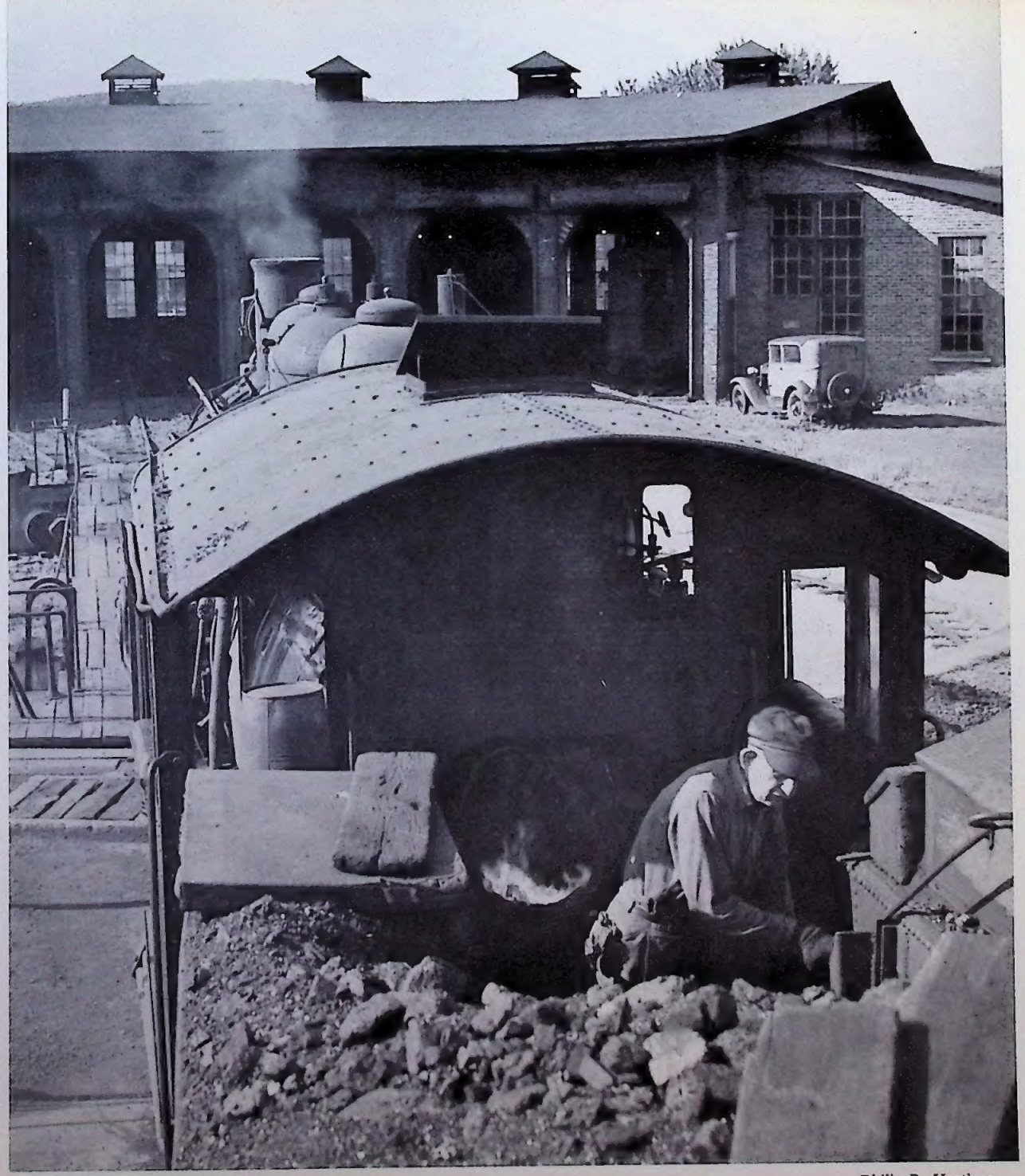
AT THE ROUNDHOUSE

EBT's eight-stall roundhouse sat just south of the road crossing at Orbisonia. Solidly constructed of brick and Pennsylvania fieldstone, the structure's architecture was typical of its time. A bit of roundhouse vocabulary in terms such as "hostler" and "stall" came from the equine stables which preceded the age of steam.

[OPPOSITE, TOP:] **The roundhouse slumbers at midday, its occupants away at work. Notable modifications made over the years included electric lighting and replacement of hinged wooden doors with roll-up steel ones.**

[OPPOSITE, BOTTOM:] **No. 15 waits on the turntable for the hostler to return. An array of fire cleaning tools, so much a part of the hostler's trade, stands ready at the rack.**

[RIGHT:] **Against a 1952 backdrop of a still-serviceable Model A Ford, a hostler builds a bed of glowing coals in the firebox of a 1915 Baldwin.**



Philip R. Hastings

The calm of a Spring evening has settled over the roundhouse and the shop complex in the background. A hostler lines the turntable preparatory to putting No. 15 in its stall, the last move of the day.

John Krause

Philip A. Ronfor

No. 12 sat silently in storage on January 10, 1956 awaiting a call to service which would not come until 1960. This, the oldest and lightest road locomotive still on the property, had a tender which rode on spoke-wheeled trucks.

Both, Philip R. Hastings

The coming of night enhanced the roundhouse atmosphere. The darkness seemed to contain the throb of air pumps and whoosh of open injectors, the smell of hot oil and mist of hissing steam. [LEFT:] **Smoke pours from one of the stack vents in the pre-dawn hour during July, 1952, and** [ABOVE:] **No. 14 simmers quietly on the turntable anticipating the next familiar move.**

Philip A. Ronfor

SHOPS AND YARDS

EBT's shop facilities were located immediately south of the roundhouse. Looking north from the south end of the shop area, the roundhouse can be seen beyond the cluster of buildings. At the far left, flat cars and a coach occupy the lead to the coach paint shop, one of the few brick structures on the property. The boiler shop is at the right.

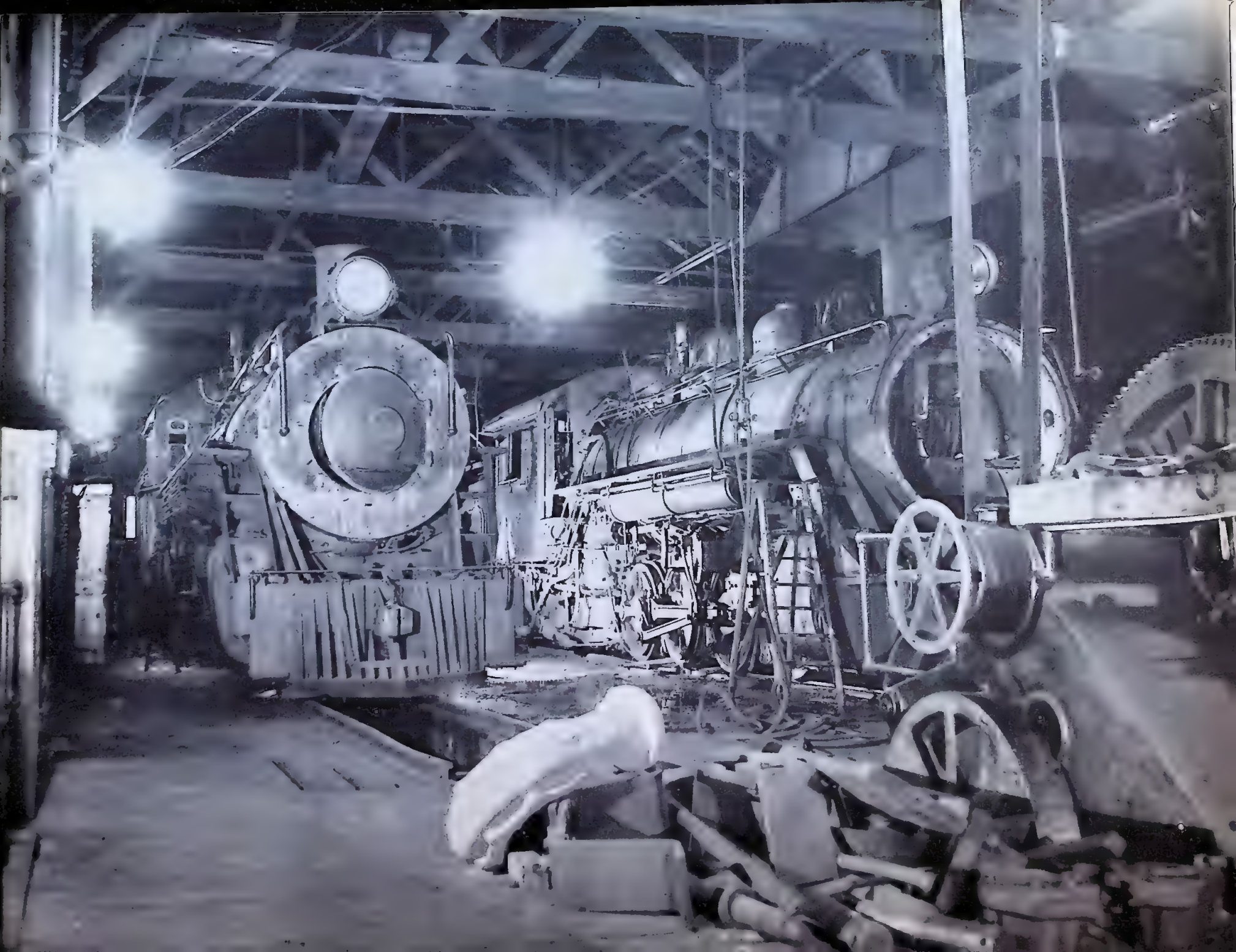
Philip R. Hastings

Inside the paint shop, a painter prepares a stencil for lettering an open-platform coach that once ran on the Boston Revere Beach & Lynn in Massachusetts.

Having completed the chores of the day, No. 17 pauses over the inspection pit adjacent to the sand house. In earlier days, a wood frame ice house stood on this side of the sand house.

Both, Philip A. Ronfor

When the EBT bought the tract of land for its shops and yards, a stone farmhouse came with the property. It became the Shop Superintendent's office when the railroad facilities were developed. The wooden structures to the left of the farmhouse were used for storage.



T.F. Gleichmann, Jr.

Although the EBT's shops were not large, they supported the railroad's operations by maintaining both cars and locomotives without any need for resorting to outside contractors. The shops possessed an atmosphere and mystique all their own, yet they were seldom photographed during their active days. [OPPOSITE:] **Nos. 17 and 18 undergo repairs just a few months before the end of operations.** [ABOVE:] **A general view of the shops looking north. The flat car, having delivered parts from a standard gauge switcher at Mt. Union, stands outside the locomotive shop. The building to the right is for the servicing of freight cars and coaches.** [RIGHT:] **Before electricity was available to industry, shop machinery was driven through a system of shafts and leather belts powered by a stationary steam engine. When rebuilding from a fire in 1882, EBT installed this Corliss engine, a miniature version of the one which awed the crowds at the 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia.**

Philip A. Ronfor

John Krause

Both, Philip R. Hastings

[LEFT:] **Hopper cars were generally repaired outdoors due to the noise of riveting guns and because the side sheets could be handled more easily. It was a dirty, noisy job, but one that was necessary on a coal-hauling railroad.** [BELOW:] **Handling standard gauge cars on narrow gauge trucks sometimes created work for the Orbisonia shop force. Carmen remove the cap on a standard gauge tank car so it can clear the tunnels at Rocky Ridge and Sideling Hill. This 1952 scene is typical of the period when asphalt for roads in southern Huntingdon County was hauled in by the railroad.**

Philip R. Hastings

The EBT built its coaling dock at the far south end of the Orbisonia yards where, on occasion, through trains would be refueled and watered. [ABOVE:] **No. 15 has spotted a hopper in the shed and now drifts down to the main. The EBT's four-wheel test car sits on the lower level. Used for calibrating the car scales, this piece of equipment was essential to a railroad whose revenues derived mostly from the movement of bulk commodities.** [RIGHT:] **The chutes for loading coal into narrow gauge tenders salute No. 16 passing by on its way south.**

John Krause

ORBISONIA TO MT. UNION

John Krause

In the final years, Orbisonia to Mt. Union runs fell into a pattern that remained unbroken to the end. [LEFT:] **Box car 184 and a combine have been brought to the depot for loading of some company freight. The train itself, several hopper loads of ganister destined for Mt. Union, waits in the yard on the other side of Meadow Street.** [OPPOSITE, TOP LEFT:] **A crewman struggles with the freight, but he appears to be under "proper supervision."** [OPPOSITE, BOTTOM LEFT:] **When depot tasks were completed, the crew would back into the yard, pick up the train, take their orders, and leave town.** [OPPOSITE, RIGHT:] **The ritual was observed many times from the dispatcher's office located on the second floor of the station building.**

John Krause

Philip R. Hastings

John Krause

John Krause

[ABOVE:] **North of Orbisonia where the Aughwick Valley widens, trains rolled to Mt. Union through a countryside dotted with farms, small towns, and pastoral scenes. A train of ganister for the brick factories at Mt. Union is just leaving the town limits of Orbisonia.**

[RIGHT:] **This ganister rock train, seen near Colgate Grove, includes a standard gauge B&O gondola loaded with scrap iron from Three Springs. A combine was used instead of a caboose because the crews preferred its superior riding qualities.**

Philip A. Ronfor

John Krause

[ABOVE:] **Adams siding, two and a half miles south of Mt. Union, was one of three passing tracks between Orbisonia and Mt. Union. One busy day in 1952, Nos. 16 and 17 passed one another carrying coal in each direction. The coal on the train at the right is, like the ganister loads, moving from the mines. The train on the left carries coal for the railroad's own use after it has been cleaned at the preparation plant in Mt. Union.**

[LEFT:] **After setting out a bad order hopper car, a 2-8-2 destined for Mt. Union heads out of Shirleysburg's forty-car siding to pick up the rest of its train and resume the northbound run.**

MT. UNION

Mt. Union was the essential point on the EBT, for it was here that the bulk shipments of coal and ganister were terminated and interchange took place. Foremost in importance was the preparation plant where coal from the mines was cleaned of rock, graded, and shipped out on standard gauge hoppers. Shipments of ganister were switched directly to one of three works where the material was used to make fire bricks. The transfer crane was the yard destination for standard gauge cars whose journey could continue only after being re-trucked to accommodate a change in gauge. [LEFT:] **No. 14 rolls into Mt. Union with an extra, the coal preparation plant and car transfer structures prominent on the skyline. Car loads of coal on the left, ganister on the right attest to a level of prosperity in 1952.** [BELOW:] **Then, while the caboose watches, No. 14 backs the loaded hoppers into the coal processing plant's receiving tracks.**

Both, Philip R. Hastings

Starting at the yard limits where the dual gauge tracks began, the rails were an exercise in plane geometry as they branched and curved about the terminal area. Two standard gauge switchers worked the yards. No. 3 was an 0-6-0 bought new from Baldwin in 1923. This was the third engine to carry that road number, and it replaced the previous No. 3 which earlier served the Pittsburgh & Lake Erie. [ABOVE:] **A summer haze hangs on the mountains as No. 3 shifts a standard gauge tank car.** [BELOW:] **No. 3 spent her thirty-three year active life drilling the Mt. Union yard, most of the time moving the ubiquitous black hoppers of the EBT and standard gauge hoppers from other roads.**

Both, John Krause

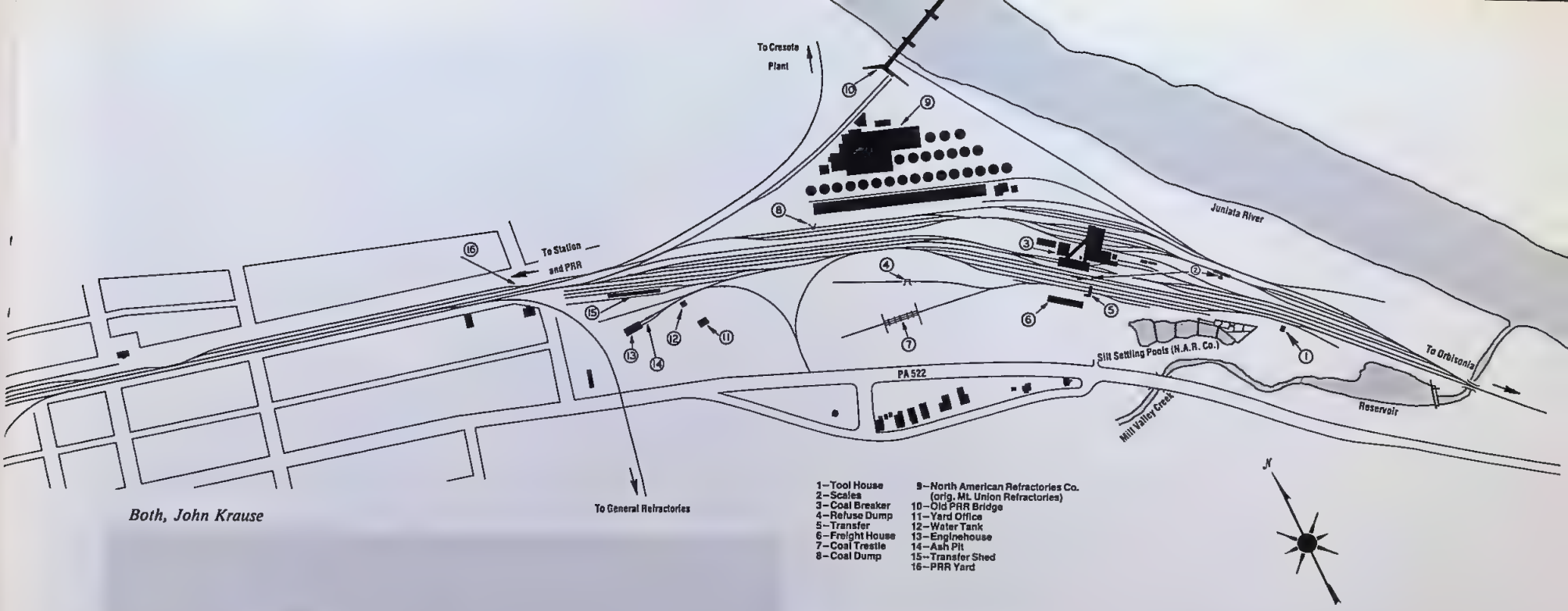
Both, Philip R. Hastings

The output of a mine consists not only of pieces of coal ranging from large lumps to fine grains but also embedded shale and rock fragments from the mining operation. Preparation is the next step in readying the coal for market and it is in this step that the rock, or bone as the shale is called, is removed. A new separation process called sand flotation was invented in 1917. Its first application to cleaning bituminous coal was at Mt. Union in 1925 and it proved to be highly successful.

Coal is taken to the top of the plant and passed over a bull shaker. Large pieces of coal are hand picked from the shaker's screen and, after being bypassed to a crusher, the pieces are mixed with the coal that did pass through the shaker. Fine particles are then removed by water action and the unprepared coal enters the separator, which is a large cone filled with a slurry of sand. Since the specific gravity of the slurry can be varied by the amount of water it contains, the water ratio is adjusted until the slurry becomes slightly denser than the coal but not as dense as the rock and bone. With agitation, the coal rises, or "floats," to the top and is passed off while the rocks sink and are drawn off at the bottom.

Preparation is complete after the coal is washed by a stream of water to remove any sand that was carried over and the coal is sized by passing a bank of shaking screens. Commercial sizes shipped from Mt. Union were lump, furnace, range, stoker, and pea. The process also recovers the fine particles, or slack, for sale and delivery.

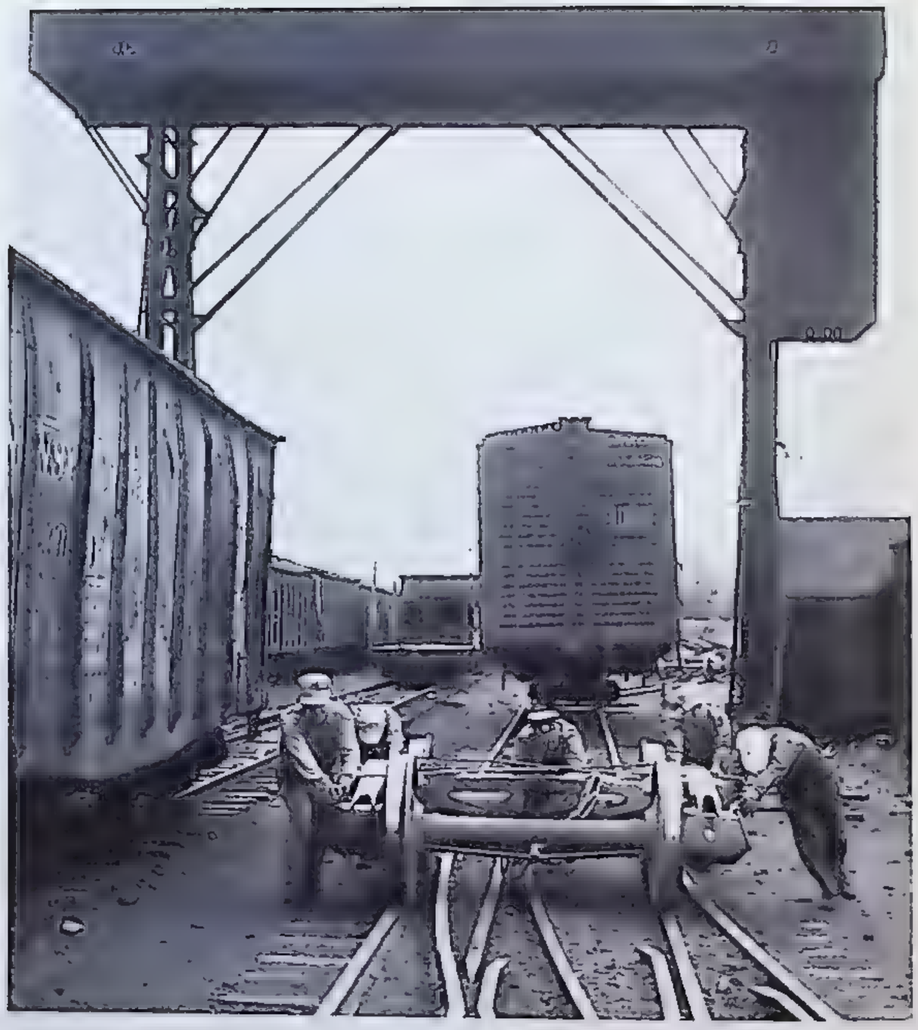
The coal preparation plant added value to the delivered coal by removing rock and sizing each shipment uniformly. The process took place where the loads had to be transferred anyway, so the penalty of extra handling was avoided. By adding value and avoiding unnecessary handling, this plant was the single factor most responsible for EBT longevity as a coal hauler and its viability as a narrow gauge. [ABOVE:] **Standard gauge hoppers are spotted under each of the loading pockets.** [LEFT:] **Controlled by its hand brake, PRR 717931 rolls across the scale. The three-way stub switch in the foreground is standard gauge!**



Both, John Krause

MT. UNION, PA. (c. 1918)

[ABOVE:] **Constructed by Baldwin in 1907, No. 6 was sixteen years older and more than twenty-six tons lighter than No. 3. The cap-like fitting conspicuous on No. 6's beam is a poling pocket. Switch crews of old sometimes moved cars by pushing them with a pole angled from the beam of the switch engine on one track to the end sill of a car on an adjacent track. The method was, however, illegal in many states because of the dangers involved.** [RIGHT:] **No. 3 combined the characteristics of both early day and contemporary locomotive design for while it featured slide valves and fluted domes, it was also equipped with Walschaerts valve gear and dual air pumps. As the last active locomotive on the EBT, it ended the railroad's common carrier operations by cleaning up Mt. Union yard on April 13, 1956.**



Both, Philip R. Hastings

In order for EBT to participate in all applicable tariffs without surcharges for break-bulk transfers, a means had to be devised for through shipments. The answer was found in the Timber Transfer, an electric-powered gantry crane that had been installed years earlier in the yards at Mt. Union. EBT's general manager developed the idea of using the gantry to replace 4′8½″ gauge trucks in incoming carbodies with 3′0″ gauge trucks and reverse the process when the cars were returned. In 1933, the sling to lift the carbodies one end at a time, some track arrangements needed for changing out the trucks, and the required coupler adapters were provided so that through operations could begin. The concept proved workable not only because re-trucking became practicable, but also because EBT's high maintenance standards for road bed and track structure kept the sway of standard gauge cars on narrow gauge trucks within manageable limits at normal operating speeds.

EBT made no extra charge for the change-of-gauge service. Although re-trucking required less labor than the transfer of lading, the process did involve a crane operator and four men for about half an hour per car. Box cars, tank cars, even hopper cars underwent the Mt. Union transformation. Re-trucking standard gauge hoppers occurred during the Depression in the early days of the transfer as mines on the Rocky Ridge branch tried to keep going by shipping run-of-mine coal directly to their customers. However, the most extensive use of the transfer occured in 1939 and 1940 during construction of the Pennsylvania Turnpike. Supplies were needed deep in the rugged Tuscarora Mountains on the right-of-way of what was to have been William Vanderbilt's South Penn Railroad. Since EBT's Shade Gap branch was the railhead nearest some of the major construction, a heavy carload traffic, particularly in cement, suddenly materialized.

Philip R. Hastings

Joe R. Thompson

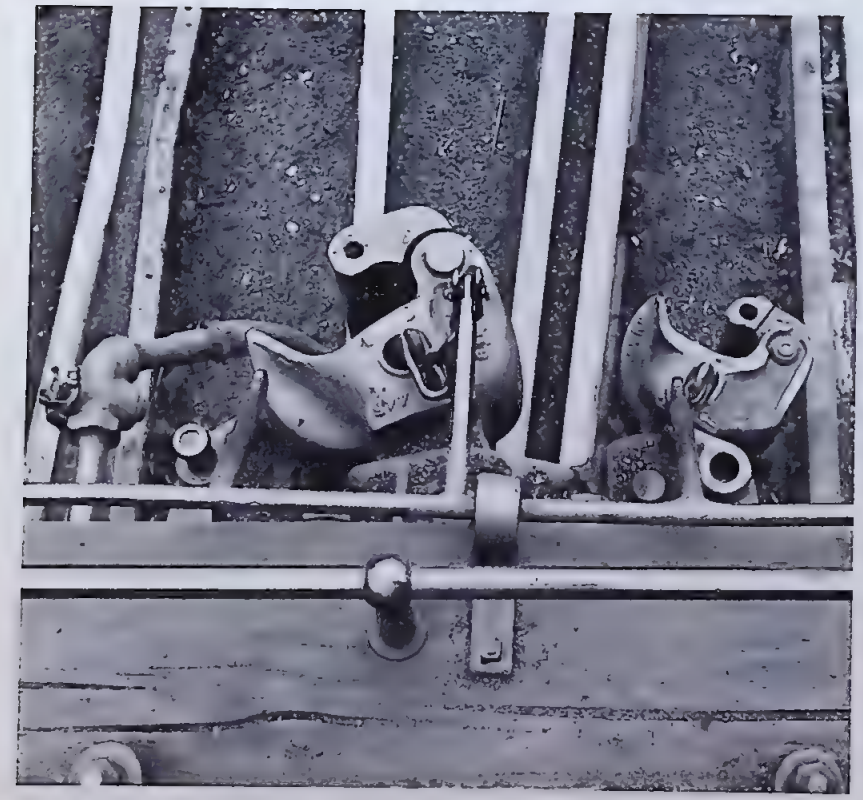
Operations at the transfer included the disconnection and reconnection of brake rigging on the standard gauge car and a ten-inch lateral movement of the crane to position the centerline of the carbody over the centerline of the gauge to which it was being transferred. The techniques the men used are seen in the photographs on these two pages. [OPPOSITE, LEFT:] **A narrow gauge truck is pushed into final position under a New York Central box car. Two of the men grasp the steps on the carbody's end sill while the other two guide the wheel set to the point where the kingpin will align properly.** [OPPOSITE, RIGHT:] **As work progresses, the other end of the carbody has already been centered over the narrow gauge track and the energies of five men are now called upon to shove the standard gauge truck onto a side track for storage.**

[THIS PAGE, LEFT:] **A narrow gauge truck is brought in from its storage track. There was nothing toy-like in these trucks whose wheels were set to 36″ gauge.** [THIS PAGE, RIGHT:] **A gentle nudge is all that's needed to prepare this end of a hopper car for its temporary wheels. The car man's posture is not so much acrobatic as it is one of gaining just the right leverage to ease things into position.**

Philip R. Hastings

Sam Fredericks

The jaws and knuckles of narrow gauge couplers were somewhat smaller and positioned slightly lower than their standard gauge counterparts. To couple standard gauge cars into narrow gauge trains, a shank was used as an adapter. [LEFT:] **The shank had no moving parts and was made of aluminum. It did, however, require plenty of muscle power to lift it into position.** [ABOVE:] **Re-trucked and coupler-adapted, a PRR cement hopper is ready to roll out of Mt. Union to Neelyton, end of the Shade Gap branch. Coupler compatibility is explained to a group of railfans on excursion, May 19, 1940.**



The standard gauge switchers which handled dual guage operations at Mt. Union were equipped with two couplers rather than a single adjustable coupler. [ABOVE:] **A straight-down view from the rear end of No. 6's tender shows the horizontal arrangements. Couplers are offset because of the difference in track centerlines between the two gauges. The common rail was always on the left side of the locomotive, facing forward.** [RIGHT:] **Differences in height are illustrated in relationship to the tender itself. The uncoupling lever lifts the pins on both couplers simultaneously.**

Both, Philip R. Hastings

Both, John Krause

Turning locomotives at Mt. Union was accomplished by the use of a dual-gauge wye, although there was seldom any need for turning standard gauge equipment. [ABOVE:] **No. 16 pulls off the wye in a scene flanked by the coal preparation plant on the one hand, the kilns of a brickyard and No. 3 switching a cut of cars on the other.** [LEFT:] **No. 17, at the tail of the wye, eases toward a remarkable bumper post.**

NEAR THE WATER TANK

Locomotives at Mt. Union were supplied with water from a tank that was weather-protected by a building that could be heated as required. This type of facility, similar to those found in Canada, was eminently satisfactory in a mountainous area where winters could be harsh. The water tank is a useful landmark for orienting oneself to the camera angles in this interesting area of the yards. [RIGHT:] **No. 16 arrives in the main yard track area with a coal train.** [BELOW, LEFT:] **EBT's freight office was a frame building with a hip roof which can be seen** [BELOW, RIGHT] **in juxtaposition to the tank.**

John Krause

Philip A. Ronfor

T. F. Gleichmann, Jr.

[OPPOSITE:] **Preparatory to a run, the engineer lubricates No. 16's valve gear while the fireman replenishes the water supply. This scene from a summer day in 1954 looks west toward the town of Mt. Union itself.**

[THIS PAGE, TOP:] **Although its two stalls were dual-gauged, the enginehouse at Mt. Union was utilized almost exclusively by the standard gauge 0-6-0 switchers. No. 6 waits at the enginehouse for assignment. Alongside, the EBT's mail and express truck also waits. Truck service, as well as a bus line into Hagerstown, Maryland, was started by the company in the late 1920s.**

[THIS PAGE, BOTTOM:] **Morning sunlight illuminates the enginehouse area. No. 14 takes on water at the tank while No. 6 is made ready to switch the interchange tracks and work the coal preparation plant.**

John Krause

Philip R. Hastings

John Krause

John Krause

[LEFT:] **No. 17 is made ready for the return to Orbisonia during the last days of operation. The less-than-carload transfer shed, a cut of loaded hoppers spotted next to it, is prominent in the background.** [BELOW:] **Several of the narrow gauge steel box cars constructed in EBT's shops in 1916 sit on the three-rail side of the LCL shed. The need for these cars declined radically when retrucking standard gauge cars was started in 1933.**

Philip R. Hastings

MT. UNION STATION

[RIGHT:] **The EBT's Mt. Union station was originally built by the Pennsylvania Railroad. In fact, all of the adjacent trackage at this point was the Pennsy's main line until an improvement program relocated the Middle Division's right-of-way to the north, expanded the line to four tracks, and elevated the road bed. As seen on a murky December morning, the structure had a size and charm commensurate with the narrow gauge trains it served.** [BELOW:] **On the last Tuesday of 1952, the rush of Christmas mail had subsided, but there was still a respectable amount brought in from Robertsdale and waypoints in the Aughwick Valley.**

Both, Philip R. Hastings

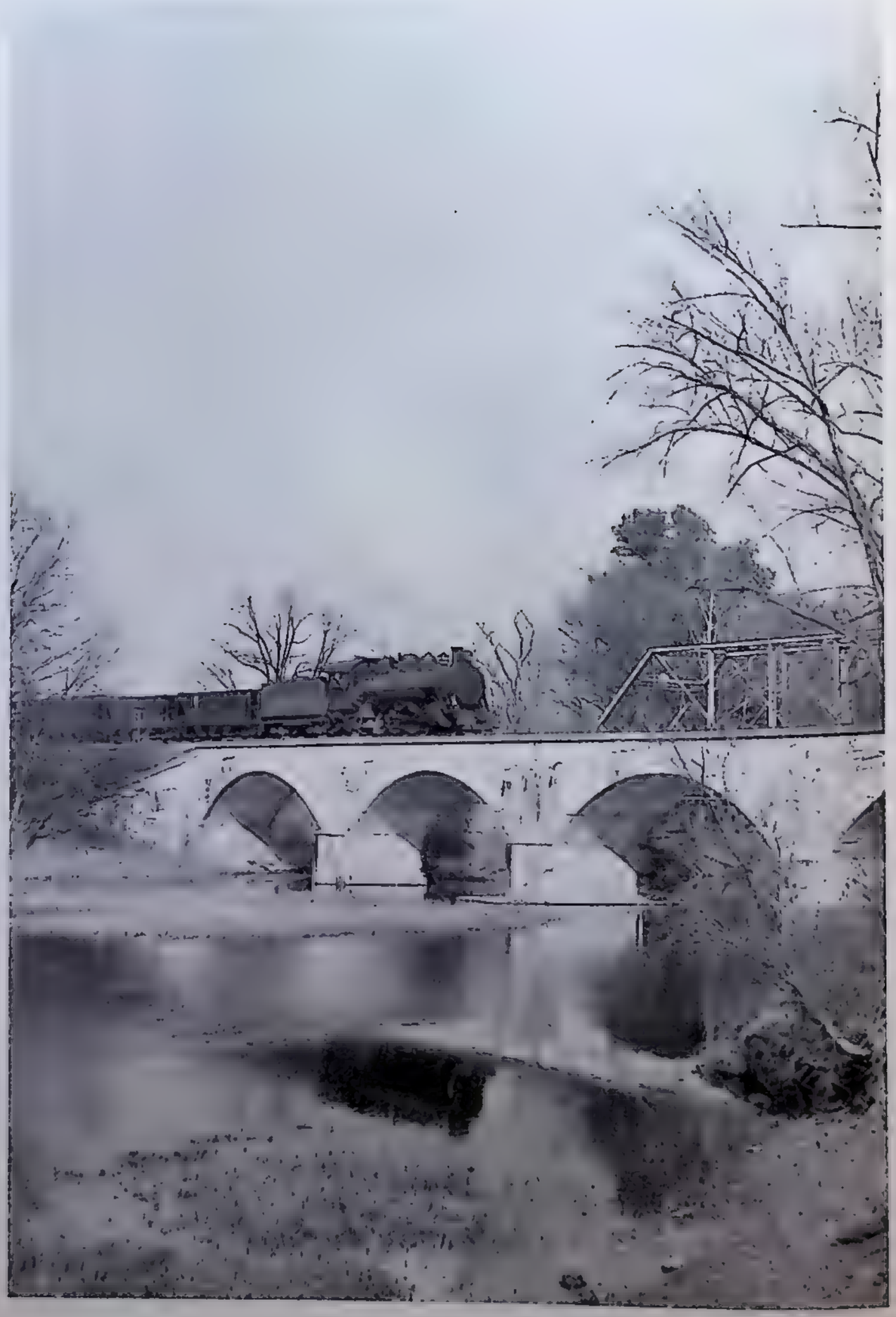
Philip R. Hastings

Robert F. Collins

[ABOVE:] **PRR No. 1795 rolls past No. 16's engine crew on what Pennsy men referred to as the "Old Main." The H-9 is en route to the main line junction a mile west at Jacks Tower.** [LEFT:] **It's springtime in Mt. Union. Square steam-chested No. 14, trim and polished for a special, is pointed toward Orbisonia and the hills beyond. The fireman in the gangway has steam up and is anxious to get going.** [OPPOSITE:] **In the course of making up its own train, No. 16 prepares to back down for the combine. The coal preparation plant, brickworks, and the borough of Mt. Union can be seen beyond the rail yard. Farther in the background, a freight train on the PRR's Middle Division can be seen cutting across the bridge and hillside.**

John Krause

James L. Komnick



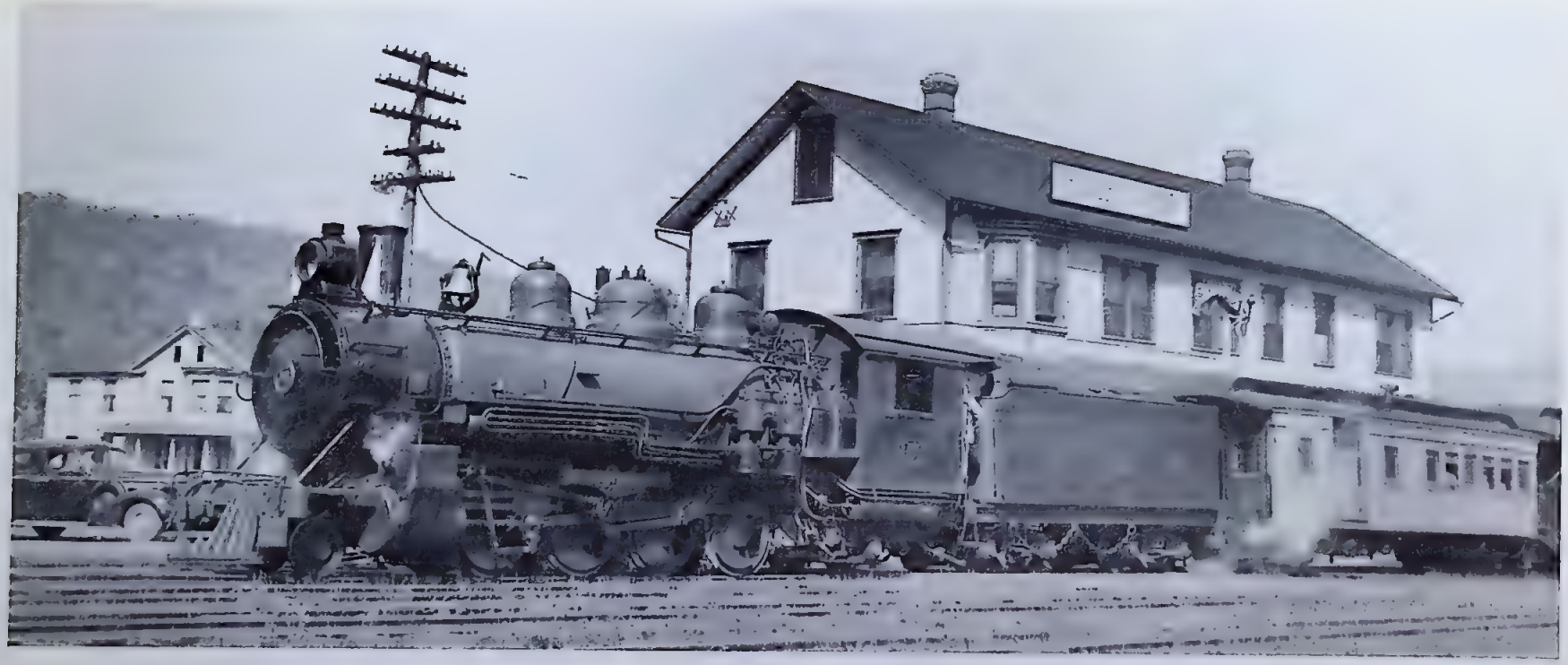
[ABOVE:] **No. 17 nears the sign which marks the end of dual gauge trackage at Mt. Union. U.S. 522, the main north-south highway through town, closely parallels the EBT on the south side.** [RIGHT:] **The imposing concrete bridge at Aughwick has more in common with bridges to be found on a major anthracite carrier than with the light spans normally sufficient for a narrow gauge line. The four-arch bridge, built in 1906 as part of a rehabilitation program, antedated the use of reinforced concrete for bridge structures on other railroads. Late fall sunshine imparts a chalk-white glimmer to the concrete arches and placid waters reflect the image of No. 17 southbound with an extra.**

John Krause

South of Aughwick, the rails followed the eastern bank of Aughwick Creek. Aughwick, meaning *water*, comes from the Welsh, an origin that was rare among the preponderantly Indian and Anglo-Saxon names given to Pennsylvania streams. A train of empty hoppers wheels south headed by No. 16. The train will cross Black Log Creek, an Aughwick tributary, just before entering Orbisonia. Later, in climbing to the Broad Top area, the consist will cross the Aughwick itself near Pogue.

Both, John Krause

Shirleysburg was one of the region's pioneer settlements and the place where Fort Shirley was established in 1754 to protect the settlers against the depredations by the French and their Indian allies. Two centuries later, No. 17 whistled by the town's unkempt cemetery.



Philip A. Ronfor

TIME TABLE NO. 83

EAST BROAD TOP RAILROAD COMPANY

In Effect Monday, May 17th, 1943

NORTHWARD				Station No.	MAIN LINE	Distance from Mount Union	SOUTHWARD		
No. 5	No. 7	No. 3	No. 1				No. 8	No. 2	No. 4
P. M.	P. M.	P. M.	A. M.				A. M.	P. M.	P. M.
.....	3 30	.....	.....	33	Leave .....Alvan..... Arrive	33.0	6 45	.....	.....
7 00	a3 35	12 05	6 15	32	.....Woodvale.....	32.0	a6 39	12 05	7 00
7 10	a3 45	a1 10	a6 30	30	.....*Robertsdale	30.0	a6 30	a11 55	a6 50
	f3 54	f1 20	f6 39	28	.....Cooks	27.0	f6 21	f11 42	f6 37
	f3 58	*1 26	†6 43	25	..... Rocky Ridge	25.0	f6 14	†11 35	†6 30
	f4 02	f1 31	f6 49	24	.....*Coles	24.0	f6 10	f11 30	f6 24
	f4 05	f1 40	f6 58	23	..... Kimmel.....	23.0	f6 06	f11 24	f6 17
	f4 08	†1 45	†7 03	22	.... Fairview	22.0	f6 02	†11 18	†6 10
	a4 20	a1 58	a7 18	19	....*Saltillo.....	19.0	a5 49	a11 00	a5 50
	a4 26	a2 06	a7 28	17	.....Three Springs.....	17.0	a5 42	a10 50	a5 40
	f4 32	†2 14	†7 36	14	.... Pogue.....	14.0	f5 34	f10 40	f5 30
	4 40			11	Arrive Leave ....*Orbisonia.....Leave Arrive	11.0	5 25	10 30	5 20
		a2 30	a7 54				.....	a10 05	a4 55
		a2 45	a8 08	7	..... Shirleysburg	7.0	.....	a9 49	a4 40
		†2 48	†8 11	5	..... Pump Station	5.0	.....	†9 44	†4 34
		†2 50	†8 14	4	.. ..Aughwick.....	4.0	.....	†9 41	†4 31
		†2 57	*8 22		.... Adams	2.4	..... .	†9 37	†4 27
		†3 00	†8 25		. ..... Allenport	1.0	.....	†9 33	†4 23
		f3 03	a8 27	1	..... *Mount Union Yard	.4	.....	f9 30	a4 20
		3 20	8 39	0	Arrive ..*Mt. Union . Leave	.0	..... .	AM 9 15	4 05

a—Regular Stop, not stop. f—Stop on signal. †Trains will *Train order stations.

SOUTH OF ORBISONIA

South of Orbisonia, the EBT becomes a mountain railroad. The rails leave the Aughwick Valley, surmount four ridges, negotiate two tunnels, and finally reach the Broad Top coal field. The climb begins at an elevation of 629 feet in Orbisonia and ends at 1811 feet in Robertsdale. With heavy grades and sharp curves, this is the dramatic part of the railroad that was shown so matter-of-factly on the timetable, yet was so fascinating to those who appreciated the way in which the nineteenth century railroad builders met the challenge of the mountains.

[ABOVE:] **The first post-war excursion operated on October 6, 1946. No. 15, waiting for the highball at Orbisonia, carried freshly-laundered white flags on the smokebox rather than in the normal position on the pilot beam.**

Both, John Krause

After clearing the Orbisonia yards, the rails begin to climb out of Black Log Creek valley on a 1½% grade. Once across Saddle Back Ridge, the grade descends to the Aughwick Creek crossing at Pogue, a downgrade that works against the movement of loaded trains coming in the opposite direction. [ABOVE:] **Working northbound, No. 17 reaches the top of the ridge with a train of ganister.** [RIGHT:] **No. 16 also blasts upgrade, a northbound coal train in tow. With fire door open, the fireman is busy bailing coal. In a few moments, the summit will be crested and the rest of the run will be largely downhill.**

[LEFT:] **Farther down on the south side of Saddle Back Ridge, northbound No. 16 works some heavy loads up the 1% grade. The brand-new 1956 Chevrolet dates the scene.** [BELOW:] **Train #7 heads north at the same road crossing. The location is near Jordan Junction where the long-abandoned line to Booher diverged from the main line. This was the "Miners' Train" which operated from Orbisonia to Alvan.** [OPPOSITE:] **The steel trestle across Aughwick Creek at Pogue is the longest bridge on the line. Its southernmost section is a girder span across a county road. Because the location is picturesque both winter and summer, it became popular as a place to photograph the EBT in action.**

John Krause

Philip R. Hastings

Philip A. Ronfor

From Pogue, the railroad runs more west than south, following Three Springs Creek to the community of that name. In a scene typical of this beautiful area, waters of the winter runoff tumble toward the Aughwick. North of town, No. 16 drifts downgrade in perfect harmony with nature.

Philip A. Ronfor

John Krause

September of 1954 is recalled in this picture of No. 16 bringing a northbound extra past the cluster of houses at Three Springs. An empty standard gauge asphalt car is prominent in the consist. When moving standard gauge cars, EBT coupled them behind the locomotive in order to minimize train handling problems, particularly on curves.

Open grounds and shade trees greet the railroad as it comes through Three Springs. What better way to see the sights than from the pilot of No. 16. The head brakeman went one better: he brought his lunch along to enjoy with the scenery.

John Krause

Philip A. Ronfor

Railfans knew that Three Springs was as pleasant a niche as any bucolic valley could offer. Their excursion on the first Sunday in October, 1946 made a point of including a photo stop here.

NARCO BRANCH

Both, John Krause

As the line approaches Saltillo depot, a junction is made with the Narco branch. Narco is an acronym formed from the initial letters of North American Refractories Company. The purpose of the branch is to reach a rock quarry where ganister, a silicon-rich sedimentary rock, is excavated and crushed for shipment. Ganister, in turn, is used to make fire bricks for furnaces and ovens because the material will not deform or change chemically at high temperatures. EBT linked the quarry with three brick works in Mt. Union. [LEFT:] **A south-bound train enters the junction area where the Narco spur diverges to the left just beyond the cut of loaded hoppers.** [ABOVE:] **No. 18 switches a box car of sand at the junction.**

Philip A. Ronfor

[ABOVE:] **Operations on the Narco branch were generally conducted by the first train called south out of Orbisonia in the morning, five days a week. Two brakemen ride this wintertime trip.** [BELOW:] **Not far from the Route 829 grade crossing, a cut of four empties is shoved up the branch by hard-working No. 17.** [RIGHT:] **No. 15 shepherds four loads down from the quarry. Because of the steep descent, the locomotive was always positioned on the downgrade end to prevent the possibility of runaway cars.**

John Krause

Philip R. Hastings

[OPPOSITE:] **No. 17 has backed up the branch and now prepares to spot the empties on the tail track above the loading area so they can be switched by gravity onto the loading track as needed. Backboards at the foot of the loading chute minimized loss from bouncing rocks. Last day for rail operation at Narco was Friday, April 6, 1956. No time was lost on ripping these tracks out so trucking service could begin.**

[RIGHT:] **Narco's quarry was at a 1300 foot elevation, 500 feet higher and generally five to ten degrees cooler than at the junction in Saltillo. Crushed rock was carried by conveyor belt to the loading chute. This view looks across Hill Valley from the loftiness of Jacks Mountain to the unbroken line of Black Log Mountain.**

[FAR RIGHT:] **No. 15's enginemen stand by just below the safety track while a maintenance crew attends to a broken rail up at the quarry. The safety track was close to the loading area, a protection in case of a runaway occurring during the loading process.**

Philip A. Ronfor

Philip R. Hastings

John Krause

Philip A. Ronfor

SALTILLO

Saltillo was an important operating point for the EBT even though the modest town of less than 400 population did not generate or terminate much freight of its own. A frame depot stood at the road crossing and contained an open telegraph office and a Railway Express Agency station. Narco junction was located on the Orbisonia side of town, a water tank and wye on the Robertsdale side. One or more box cars with sacks of locomotive sand were kept at Saltillo for replenishing the sand domes on runs that climbed the Narco branch or challenged the steep main line grades. [ABOVE:] **No. 17 approaches the station area with authority, a fully loaded coal train on the drawbar. The proximity of the water tank to the station area can be seen.**

John Krause

Philip R. Hastings

[ABOVE:] **No. 17, on a different trip from the one shown on the opposite page, passes the depot and a sand-filled box car.** [ABOVE, RIGHT:] **M-3 pauses at Saltillo. This home-built motor car was used to ferry maintenance crews over the line.** [RIGHT:] **The agent loads mail aboard Train #3 while the brakemen inspect the train after its descent from the mountain.**

Philip R. Hastings

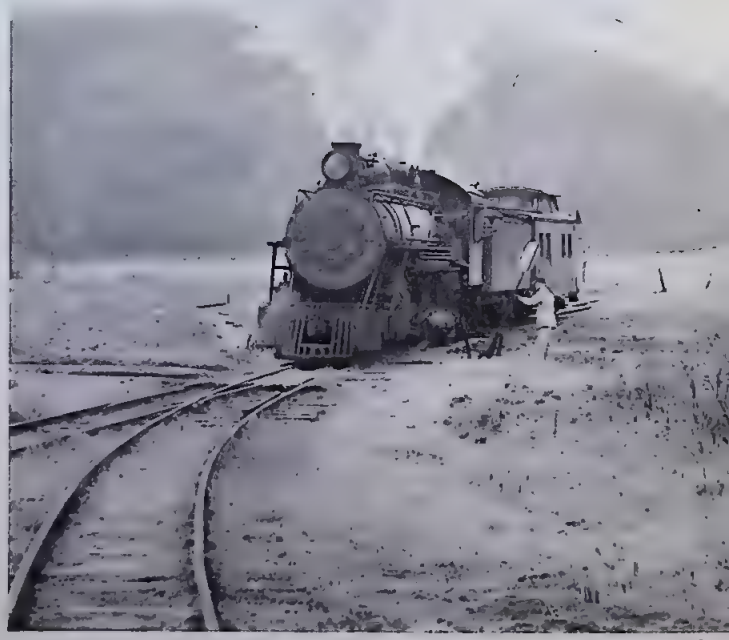
Philip R. Hastings

James L. Komnick

[LEFT:] **In a classic scene from 1952, a crewman from Train #2 delivers a package from the express compartment of combine 15. A family group on the platform paving and a new DeSoto at an old-style Atlantic station complete the ambiance of a generation ago.**

[ABOVE:] **The crew of Extra 18 North refills the sand dome. The bucket brigade method would be difficult enough on a sunny summer day, but windy winter days with fresh snow around was just when the sand was needed most.**

John Krause



Philip A. Ronfor

[ABOVE:] **No. 17 cruises south on the main, the Saltillo wye in the foreground, the town in back. The wye was constructed to turn engines working only as far south as the Narco branch before returning north. This is one such trip.**

[RIGHT:] **Having backed in the wye from the main, No. 17 and caboose are ready to run north. Saltillo's wye used a stub switch in the grand tradition of narrow gauge railroading.**

[RIGHT:] **The spatial relationship between the tank and wye is seen in this view of a southbound train of empty coal hoppers taking water at Saltillo.** [BELOW:] **No. 17's fireman controls the flow of water from the tank within the structure to the tank within the tender. A crude but effective indicator on the side of the building above the windows shows that the tank is a little over half full.**

John Krause

Philip A. Ronfor

SIDELING HILL

It is roughly 1½ aerial miles from Saltillo to Fairview, but four by rail through an almost inaccessible area. The altitude changes from 778 to 1104 feet above sea level resulting in a steady grade of roughly 1½% southbound. No. 18 illustrates the work in making this difficult climb as it blasts through Fairview with Train #2 on August 1, 1949. In spite of being fresh from the shops, No. 18 pours smoke from the stack, an unusual sight on the EBT whose excellent coal usually burned cleanly.

Robert F. Collins

John Krause

Philip A. Ronfor

Sideling Hill, one of the major ridges of the Appalachian chain, extends north from West Virginia almost to the Juniata River. The upthrust reaches 1700 foot heights and builders of the EBT responded to it by boring an 830 foot tunnel near Kimmel. [ABOVE:] **No. 16 emerges from the north portal in a view that shows the mechanized roll-up door. This door was installed to prevent winter winds from freezing underground spring water within the tunnel and thereby forming ice that would cause derailments. A derailment did occur to No. 12 on one of its early trips whereupon wooden doors were installed and** [RIGHT:] **a watchman was stationed in a nearby shanty to open and close them. Failure to respond to a southbound train, like one shown here, resulted in a crash that shattered the doors and precipitated a decision to automate the operation.**

Both, John Krause

The south portal of Sideling Hill tunnel was not equipped with an automatic door but it did have a modified highway-type traffic light to signal engineers as to whether the door at the other portal was open or in the process of opening. The door was actuated by electrical control switches mounted on trackside poles at each end of the tunnel and for travel in each direction. As the train approached the tunnel, one of the engine crew would reach out and pull a hand-sized ring that was suspended by chain from an arm on the pole. This caused the door to open and it was the responsibility of a rear end crewman to close the door as he passed the control point beyond the tunnel. [LEFT:] **Trains exited the tunnel still fighting the grade. The traffic signal and cat's whiskers tell-tale are clearly seen in this south portal view only a hundred yards from the waypoint of Kimmel.** [BELOW:] **No. 17 eases past the abandoned watchman's shack at the south portal.**

KIMMEL

On March 23, 1956, the snow-covered siding at Kimmel was witness to the last meet between two narrow gauge freights along the flank of Sideling Hill. [OPPOSITE, TOP:] **The crew of Extra 16 North paused to advise the dispatcher of their location and check on the southward progress of No. 18.** [OPPOSITE, BOTTOM:] **No. 18, after storming out of the tunnel, crossed the road to find the switch properly lined by No. 16's head brakeman.** [THIS PAGE, TOP:] **As the two locomotives passed safely, the engineer on No. 18 widened on his throttle and continued to blast upgrade.** [THIS PAGE, BOTTOM:] **The caboose comes abreast of No. 16. A few seconds later, the switch was thrown and No. 16's whistle had called in the rear flagman. Those were the last precious moments for the mingled sounds of two freight trains to echo each other along this mountain ridge.**

All, John Krause

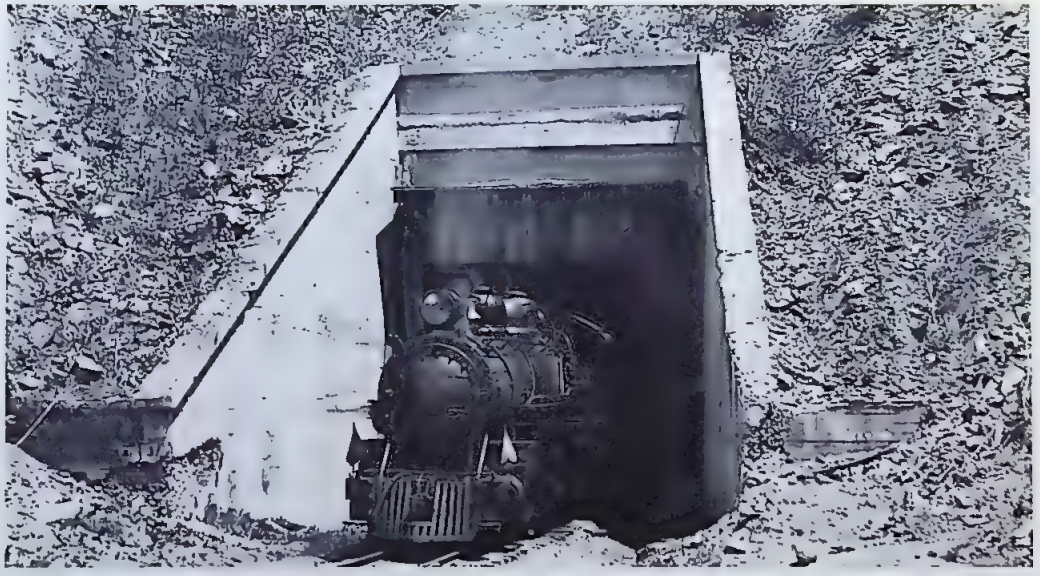
ROCKY RIDGE

Southbound from Kimmel, the EBT follows the flank of Sideling Hill to the head of Coles Valley. There, the track makes a muleshoe curve to reach the other side of the valley and prepares for its climb up the side of Wray's Hill to the second tunnel. As the climb begins, the Coles Valley Branch, 2¼ miles of steep, twisting line to the mines at Joller, diverges from the main. The mines closed after the Korean War and the track was removed in the spring of 1955. Unlike the first tunnel which has a curve at the end, Rocky Ridge's tunnel is straight and, at 1235 feet in length, it is half again as long. Rocky Ridge station and junction area lies just beyond the south portal. Rocky Ridge was once a train order station because, until 1940, a 4½-mile line to Evanston branched at this point.

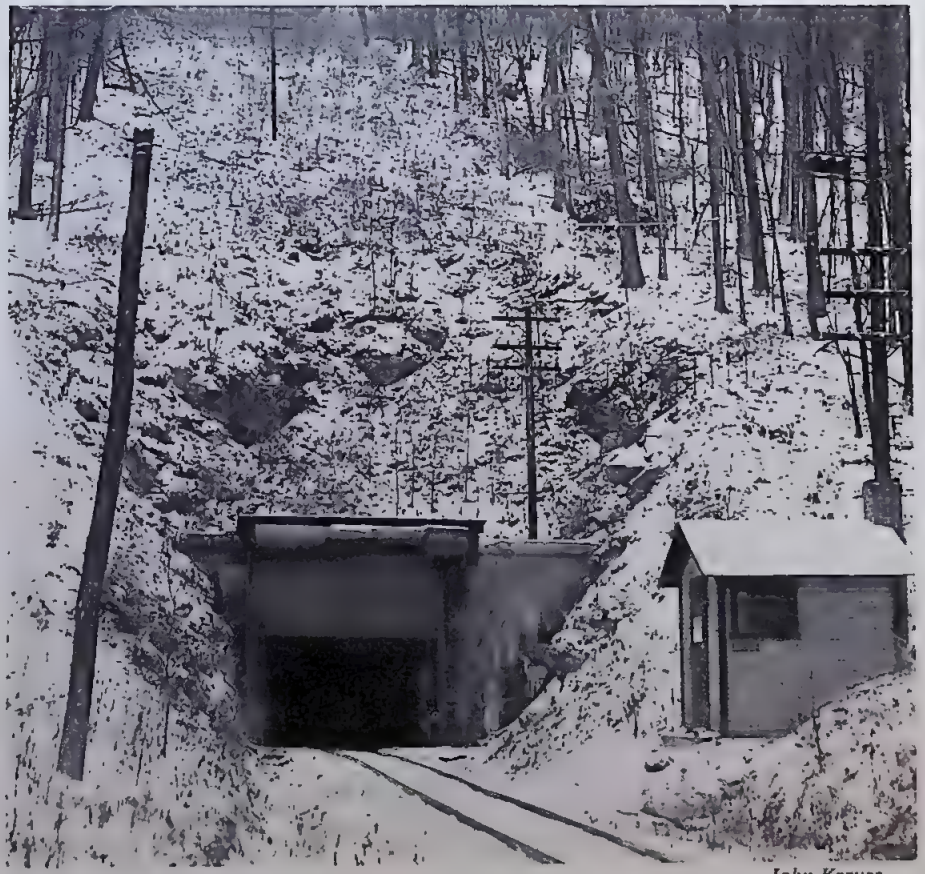
[OPPOSITE:] **Top-of-the-world topography can be seen from the heights of Rocky Ridge. The next-to-last northbound coal train from Robertsdale is seen approaching the sixteen-car passing track. Connections to the Rocky Ridge branch formed a wye. The scar of one of the legs can be seen at track level on the near hillside, but a view of the other leg is blocked by the shoulder of the mountain. Both the wye and the main line had spans to cross Trough Creek. Broad Top Mountain itself rises skyward in the far background.**

[THIS PAGE, TOP:] **The original wooden doors at the south portal of Rocky Ridge tunnel were still in place for the railfan photographers on their May, 1940 excursion. No. 14 did the posing.**

[THIS PAGE, BOTTOM:] **Like the bore at Sideling Hill, Rocky Ridge's tunnel had an automatic door installed at the north portal. Train #3 had just left the scene, the actuating ring has been pulled, and the door is rolling down. The traffic signal is visible in the upper right corner.**



Sam Fredericks



John Krause

James L. Komnick

In a snowy meet at Cooks, No. 17 took the twenty-two car side track to wait for No. 18 and its coal-laden consist to pass on the main.

All, John Krause

THE BROAD TOP COAL FIELD

The Broad Top coal field, occupying only fifty square miles and totally isolated from all other coal deposits, consists of the Kelly, Barnett, and Fulton seams. Of the mines that fed traffic to the EBT, most excavated their coal from the Fulton seam. This coal was a high-grade semi-bituminous, a less commonly found type that was nearly smokeless when properly burned. Because of its high energy content, this coal is preferred for smithing and was widely used in the days of coal-fired steamships because it occupied less bunker space per unit of heat. Coal from the Fulton seam also came to be used extensively in eastern cities for domestic and steam plant purposes. The coal was, however, easily crushed in handling and contained an annoying admixture of shale.

Most of the field east of Broad Top Mountain was worked by the Rockhill Coal & Iron Company which owned not only the mines but also the EBT. At the onset of the Depression, six mines having a daily capacity of 3150 tons were in operation but the company failed as the demand for its coal weakened and poor economic conditions lingered. Rockhill Coal Company was formed on August 24, 1938 to take over the properties. The new company was only marginally successful and had only three mines active by 1946. Even with the cost-cutting efficiencies of strip mining, the market for coal collapsed almost completely after the Korean War and the final rail shipments were made in March, 1956.

[RIGHT:] **As coal trains departed Robertsdale, they passed over a trackscale so that each car could be weighed. That operation has already taken place for No. 16's train which is seen waiting at the north end of the yard for No. 15 to arrive with a train of empties.** *Philip A. Ronfor*

Both, John Krause

ROBERTSDALE

[ABOVE:] **The chilly, hilltop community of Robertsdale numbered less than 800 inhabitants, but it was provided with a masonry station for EBT passengers and agency business. A group of railroaders sheltered themselves from the wind on a blustery January day in 1956. No. 16 rattles a string of empties for the loading docks.**

[OPPOSITE:] **EBT was wholly owned by the Rockhill Coal Company and its predecessors. As a result, coal company affairs and railroad operations were always closely coordinated. The coal company offices at the right are constructed of the same material as the EBT station. The haze of a winter day enshrouds the surrounding hills, softening them to the eye.**

John Krause

[ABOVE:] **Action abounds at Robertsdale. As the coal trains are made up and prepared for weighing, empties are moved in to take their place for loading.** [RIGHT:] **An employee unloads an express shipment from combine 14 which came up on Train #2.**

Philip R. Hastings

Philip A. Ronfor

Philip R. Hastings

[ABOVE:] **No. 17 transacts a little business at the Robertsdale freight house which was located between the legs of the wye.** [ABOVE, RIGHT:] **No. 16 is turned on the wye with its combine for a crew car. The coal offices and freight house are seen from a different angle.** [RIGHT:] **Looking toward the tail of the wye, the view is totally different with little to suggest the overpowering presence of a mining industry so close at hand.**

John Krause

Both, John Krause

[ABOVE:] **Amid Christmas-card whiteness, No. 16 chuffs from the station area toward the water tank. The as yet unfrozen waters of Trough Creek flow at the right; the enginehouse is seen in the background above the bend in the stream. In the center background, No. 1 mine's coal loader and the snow covered roofs of Robertsdale complete the scene.** [LEFT:] **No. 18 approaches the enclosed tank at Robertsdale. No. 5 mine, the coal company's largest, is opposite the tank.**

Two views of No. 16 taking water at Robertsdale tank show additional details. [BELOW:] Close clearances prevailed when narrow gauge hoppers were spotted here for loading. [RIGHT:] The chimney of the water tank enclosure is visible in this view. A fresh snow certainly mitigates the dreary, forbidding tones of coal country everywhere.

John Krause

Philip R. Hastings

WOODVALE

In the three miles between Robertsdale and rails' end at Alvan, there were several sidings for loading hoppers with the rich Broad Top coal. The sidings were used by both Rockhill Coal Company and independent operators. Heart of the strip mining area was at Woodvale, two miles south of Robertsdale. Coal was trucked to the railroad from mines a mile or two away.

[OPPOSITE:] **The Woodvale panorama as seen in 1952 shows how basic the means of car loading was. The job is being done with two men, yet seven cars are already loaded, another is ready, and a substantial string of empties is needed to keep pace with the tonnage being supplied. Many of EBT's 250 hoppers had extended sides to increase capacity.**

[THIS PAGE, TOP:] **Woodvale remained active to the end, for this view of the dumping operation was taken in January, 1956. The passage of Train #2 attracts little attention from the loading crew.**

[THIS PAGE, BOTTOM:] **No. 15 takes a caboose south to Alvan. The loaded cars on this siding beside Robertsdale tank will be picked up on the return trip. Run of mine coal comes in various sizes, as seen in this view from a higher elevation.**

Philip R. Hastings

Philip A. Ronfor

Philip A. Ronfor

[RIGHT:] **Occasionally, other freight originated or terminated in the Broad Top mining area as illustrated by feed sacks being unloaded from box car 184 into a 1950 Ford pickup. The presence of a companion box car provides a carrying capacity that suggests that this shipment was a break-bulk operation at Mt. Union.** [BELOW:] **EBT's line ended at Alvan, near the headwaters of Trough Creek. After abandonment of a lumber road years ago, the sidings around Alvan were the only rails in all of Fulton County. Of Pennsylvania's sixty-seven counties, Fulton was once the only one without mainline trackage, but it was nevertheless the beneficiary of a $50,000 grant from the New Deal to eliminate grade crossings. And, thanks to the PRR's lobbying abilities, it became the only county in which a full crew law applied. Fortunately, none of this governmental nonsense affected the EBT's operations on the loading spurs. Because there was no wye at Alvan, locomotives ran tender first on return to Robertsdale.**

Both, Philip A. Ronfor

EBT MEN AT WORK

For as long as coal fired the furnaces of industry, the EBT was successful. That success depended, as it does with all organizations, to a degree upon equipment, physical plant, and other capital investments. To a larger extent, however, EBT's century of success was made possible by capable people. The Roberts family persevered for nearly twenty years to make the EBT a reality. Robertsdale carries their name. Robert S. Seibert thoroughly upgraded the property in the early 1900s. The concrete bridge at Aughwick stands as a monument to his efforts. Charles D. Jones who adapted the timber transfer for re-trucking standard gauge cars and C. Roy Wilburn whose background embraced both mining and railroading were among those who led the organization. Then, in 1956, Nick Kovalchick and his family came to guide the fortunes of the EBT.

In addition to these leaders, railroad men of every rank contributed to the vitality and safe operation of the line and shops. At times, there were well over 200 employees, and as common carrier operations ceased, there were still a hundred in the ranks. Some of their activities are depicted in the following pages.

Like most short lines, the EBT operated largely during the daylight hours and rested during the evening. And like farmers, the railroad men rose before dawn to start their activities. One of the pre-dawn chores was to steam up, an activity that took some poking around the ash pan, and generally make sure the engine was ready for a day's work.

Philip R. Hastings

Both, Philip R. Hastings

[LEFT:] **Rare indeed is the railroad man who can't appreciate a good yarn and spin one in return. The gentle banter takes place here beside No. 15 during an over-the-road delay.**

[ABOVE:] **A standard part of the brakeman's job on Train #2 was to handle the mail and express. Among the sacks and boxes is a Crosley television on its way to some potential viewers in southern Huntingdon County. It was one of seven million TV sets manufactured by American industry in 1952. More than electronics, there was a new life style in that box which rode the ancient combine.**

[ABOVE:] **It wasn't the first time and it won't be the last time that the enginemen had to deal with a minor derailment. At least this particular mishap in three-rail territory didn't leave the tender leaning at a crazy, dangerous angle.**

[RIGHT:] **The hostler has No. 15 nicely centered on the turntable. Rotation is by hand, or perhaps a strong back would be a better way to phrase it.**

Both, John Krause

Both, Philip R. Hastings

[ABOVE:] **The engineer and head brakeman both have a good view for this move to pick up caboose 27. In the post-war period, rear crews had but two cabooses available to them.** [RIGHT:] **Nos. 16, 17, and 18 had Southern valve gear, thus making EBT one of the few railroads other than the Southern itself to be so equipped. The engineer's job included knowing its motion and how to keep it properly lubricated. Sitting on the rail at left is someone who knows something else: he knows that heroes wear overalls and carry oil cans.**

Both, Philip R. Hastings

[LEFT:] **The source of all the aggravation has been definitely located. Now it's up to the track crew to arrive with their speeder and the necessary tools to make a temporary patch, rerail the hopper, and let the trainmen get on with the day's work.** [ABOVE:] **A Reading box car, being picked up at Three Springs after its cargo of feed was unloaded, is backed down to the northbound train of ganister rock. The head brakeman hurries back to make the coupling. Standard gauge or narrow gauge, it was all in a day's work.**

MOTOR CAR M-1

EBT's day-to-day passenger traffic was never more than a trickle, and as the campaign to pave rural roads succeeded, public dependence upon the railroad ended. The coal company, seeking as wide a labor market as possible, arranged for a train schedule that would permit workers to commute to the mines from points as far north as Orbisonia. On Saturdays and other days when the mines were closed, the railroad was still obliged to operate the service, principally for mail and express. The economy of a gas car was attractive even for this limited use.

Late in 1926, EBT ordered parts for a self-propelled mail and express 12-passenger combine from J. G. Brill Company in Philadelphia. The 46-ton unit, assembled in 1927 by EBT, rolled out of the Orbisonia shops with road number M-1. In deference to the horsepower available to fight the steep grades, EBT equipped passenger coach No. 8 with roller bearings for use as M-1's trailer when extra capacity was called for. Regular assignment of M-1 ended with the cessation of passenger service in 1953.

Both, John Krause

In rightside, leftside views at Robertsdale, M-1 is shown at the station. In each direction, the car was stopped so that the mail and express door would be located for easy loading and unloading of a hand car. M-1 was equipped with an air whistle, an electric horn, and a bell.

Hal Carstens

[ABOVE:] **M-1's cargo of mail is loaded and there's one fare-paying passenger this trip. The scene is at Mt. Union, July 8, 1950.** [BELOW, LEFT:] **A substantial number of packages were off-loaded at Saltillo one Saturday morning in 1949.** [BELOW, RIGHT:] **The stop at Orbisonia was as much a post office stop as a station stop.**

Hal Carstens

F. A. Kramer

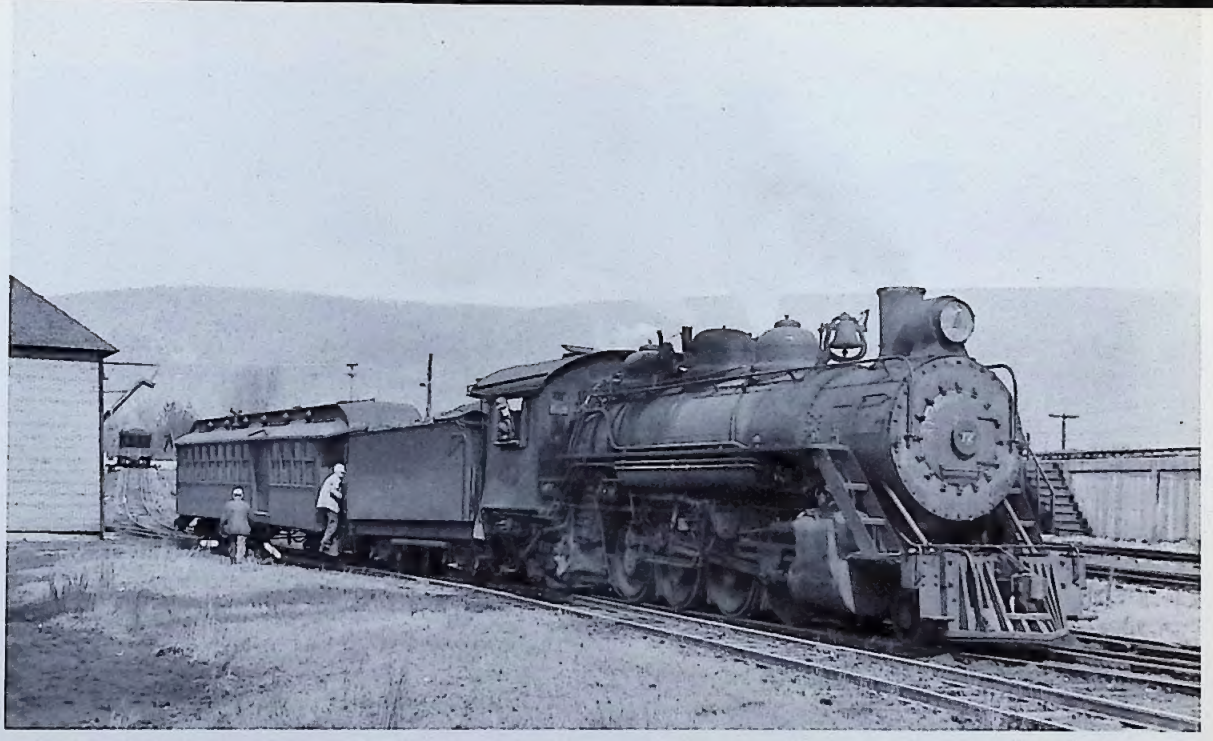
Sam Fredericks

Except for service that was scheduled to carry miners who commuted to the Broad Top coal fields, passenger traffic was trivial. The first organized fan trip over the EBT was a three-car excursion held May 3, 1936. The second trip was held four years later on May 19, 1940. As seen here, five cars were needed to accommodate the crowd of over two hundred enthusiasts. Neckties, business suits, and folding cameras were the order of the day. The popularity of riding EBT rails in the post-war period began with a fan trip on October 6, 1946. Perhaps these fan trips, dating back nearly half a century, were precursors of what was to provide many a tourist with a memorable experience.

THE LAST RUN

Typical of Pennsylvania's thirty-six narrow gauge railroads, the EBT was built to move the raw materials that supported the economy of the Commonwealth. Their contributions were indeed positive. One by one, the narrow gauge lines passed from the scene after the last timber was cut or the minerals economically exhausted. Finally, only the East Broad Top remained. But while the coal was still available, the market for it was not.

There was little to distinguish the trip made by No. 17 on Friday, April 6, 1956 from countless others in years past. Only the total lack of activity at Mt. Union gave a clue that this day was ominously different. The 1922 Baldwin brought the last revenue loads of ganister down from the Narco quarry, spotted the cars, turned, took water, and returned to Orbisonia. The crew paused for a group picture, but what had been the last run generated little publicity and evoked no outpouring of emotion. The EBT ended as it had begun — with pride.

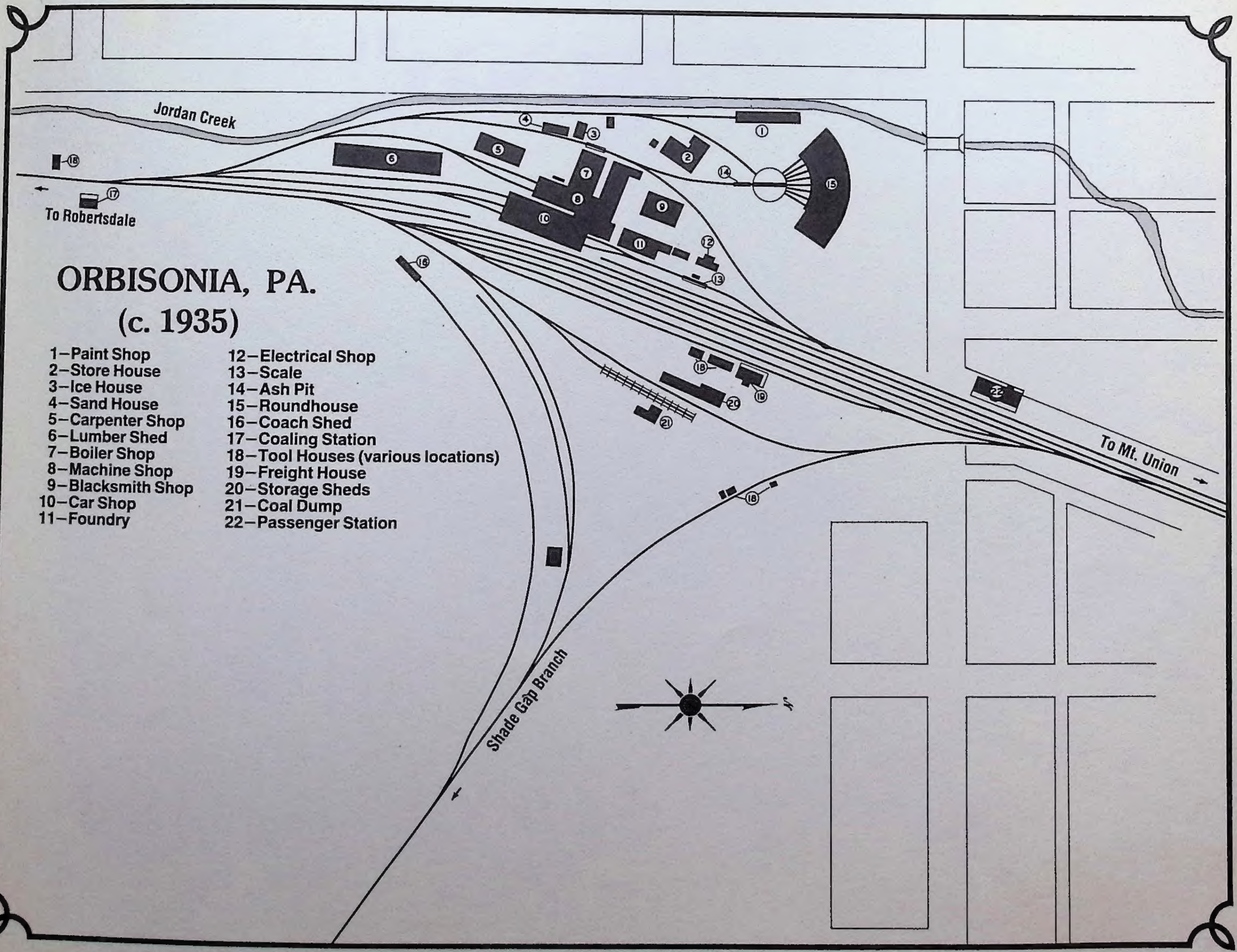


Both, John Krause

Both, John Krause

After abandonment as a common carrier in April of 1956, EBT was purchased by the Kovalchick Salvage Company. It was generally anticipated that the railroad would be torn up, but instead, it was kept intact. In 1960, the planning committee for Orbisonia's bi-centennial celebration suggested that train rides would be an appropriate attraction during the week-long festivities. Nick Kovalchick agreed, and a group of former employees began restoring track and equipment for the great day. [ABOVE:] **When Millie Kovalchick shattered a bottle of pale dry ginger ale over the pilot of No. 12 on August 13, 1960, a second career had been launched for the venerable coal hauler.**

[LEFT:] **The EBT became a mid-February mecca for steam railroad fans who gathered for the annual Winter Spectacular. These two-day events sponsored by Railways to Yesterday generate intense interest with a variety of operations such as doubleheading, seen here with Nos. 14 and 12.**



ORBISONIA, PA.
(c. 1935)

1–Paint Shop
2–Store House
3–Ice House
4–Sand House
5–Carpenter Shop
6–Lumber Shed
7–Boiler Shop
8–Machine Shop
9–Blacksmith Shop
10–Car Shop
11–Foundry
12–Electrical Shop
13–Scale
14–Ash Pit
15–Roundhouse
16–Coach Shed
17–Coaling Station
18–Tool Houses (various locations)
19–Freight House
20–Storage Sheds
21–Coal Dump
22–Passenger Station

EAST BROAD TOP RAILROAD
(c. 1918)

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